DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 365 030 EC 302 655

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TITLE Making Connections through Voice: Teacher Receptivity to Change.
INSTITUTION Vermont Univ., Burlington. Coll. of Education & Social Services.
SPONS AGENCY Special Education Programs (ED/OSERS), Washington, DC.
PUB DATE 30 Sep 92
NOTE 44p.; In: Fitzgerald, Martha. School Building Models for Educating Students with Disabilities in the Regular Education Environment; see EC 302 653.
PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Adoption (Ideas); *Change Agents; *Disabilities; *Educational Change; Educational Environment; Elementary Secondary Education; Individual Power; Influences; Models; Organizational Climate; *Participative Decision Making; Quality of Working Life; *Resistance to Change; Rural Education; Self Efficacy; Special Education Teachers; *Teacher Attitudes; Teachers; Teaching Conditions
IDENTIFIERS *Empowerment

ABSTRACT

This study used focused interviews, participant observations, and document review to identify five organizational and personal factors that 40 teachers (general education, special education, and specialists) in a small rural school district reported as affecting their receptivity to change: (1) the degree to which schools are ready for change; (2) support from principals, colleagues, and community members; (3) voice--the ability of teachers to initiate and decide change and to be heard as respected members of the school community; (4) meaningfulness of change; and (5) efficacy--the degree to which teachers feel they make a difference in the lives of students. A model is developed to show the progressive and interactive relationship among these factors. The factor of voice appears to provide a critical connection between organizational and personal factors, increasing teacher receptivity to change. (Contains 30 references.) (JDD)

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MAKING CONNECTIONS THROUGH VOICE: TEACHER RECEPTIVITY TO CHANGE

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September 30, 1992

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ABSTRACT

Research studies increasingly focus on the pivotal role that teachers play in educational reform. Yet limited qualitative data exist in which teachers describe their willingness to change. This study identifies five organizational and personal factors which teachers in a small rural school district say affect their receptivity to change: basic conditions, support, voice, meaning and efficacy. A model is developed to show the progressive and interactive relationship among these factors. The factor of voice - the ability of teachers to initiate and decide change and to be heard as respected members of the school community - appears to provide a critical connection between organizational and personal factors, increasing teacher receptivity to change.

RESEARCH FRAMEWORK

> Change? I'm pretty conservative. The minute somebody says 'change,' I say, 'Shut up, sit down, back up.' If somebody says, 'We are changing this and this and this, and we are going to do it tomorrow,' I am the first one to fight it because I want time to think it through, look at it, examine it, check it out....to see if it works and fits for me (Jackson teacher).

Change does not come easily to many teachers. Schools provide frameworks of theory, values and meaning which enable participants to make sense of their lives (Fullan, 1991). Change, which is often accompanied by chaos and unpredictability, threatens these frameworks. It can lead to "consternation for some, indignation for others, shock for still others, and hope for a few" (Hall, Loucks, Rutherford, & Newlove, 1975, p. 5).

Because educational change "depends ultimately on what the teacher thinks and does in the classroom" (Larson, 1988, p. 55), it is important to understand how teachers receive and react to change. Yet teacher attitudes about change have attracted little attention in the literature on educational reform (Rudduck, 1991; Fullan, 1991). Recent research by Richardson (1991), Smylie (1991) and Waugh & Punch (1987) on teacher willingness to change, however, points to two types of factors, organizational and personal, to explain why many teachers accept or reject change.

Organizational factors refer to the culture of schools: the basic assumptions, common values and shared expectations for what a school is and should be. Teachers often evaluate school changes

according to how well the changes mesh with these "sacred" norms (Rossman, Corbett & Firestone, 1988). Changes which are consistent with or promote established patterns of practice and belief are more likely to be accepted. Changes which are incompatible will be resisted and abandoned (Smylie, 1991). Richardson (1991) suggests it is not surprising that organizational factors emerge as major barriers in teacher implementation of planned changes. After all, it is the organization which has traditionally developed and mandated changes with limited participation from teachers. Teachers are "pawns in the system with little power to make autonomous decisions" (p. 70). Organizational factors include teacher involvement in initiating and implementing plans (Fullan, 1991), the degree of collegiality and support for experimentation in schools (Little, 1987), the level of consensus among faculty members regarding school goals and organization of work (Rosenholtz, 1989); and the type of resources, including leadership, available to support change (Rossman, et al., 1988). They affect the willingness of teachers to step back from the established and accept "new definitions of what is and what ought to be" (Rossman et al., 1988, p. 129).

Teachers also evaluate changes according to "personal fit" with their backgrounds and skills in teaching. Waugh & Punch (1987), for instance, note the impact of personal attitudes and feelings about change; teachers make a personal cost appraisal of the amount of time, energy and commitment needed to learn new skills before deciding whether the changes are worth investing in. Richardson (1991) describes a variety of studies which conclude

that teacher beliefs about how and what students should learn, derived from their own personal experiences and biographies as students and in previous years teaching, significantly influence teacher willingness to change. Lortie (1975) finds that teachers usually internalize the practices of their own previous teachers. If teachers are to behave in new ways, they will have to confront, understand, and be freed of these unconscious influences and then synthesize the best of past and current practices.

Organizational and personal factors can be related. Wagen, et al. (1982) identify, for instance, relationships between organizational and individual characteristics to explain teacher willingness to risk change. "Innovative" teachers in this study feel significantly more power to influence administrative decisions and policies related to teaching than "other" teachers because they are more involved in professional activities related to their teaching responsibilities, are older with more years of teaching experience, and are more inclined to experiment.

The Research

This study seeks to expand our understanding of teacher receptivity to change by focusing on what teachers in a small and rural school district say about their experiences with change. What organizational and personal factors affect teacher receptivity to change? How do they relate? We need to know what change looks from the point of view of the teacher in order to know how institutional elements, such as school boards, teacher training programs, and school financing, can support fundamental school change at the local level.

Lightfoot (1983) suggests that the portraits of a few schools can enlarge our understanding of the experiences of many schools. Portraits of small and rural schools, which comprise 47.2 percent of all school districts in this nation (Elder, 1992), are also often missing in the educational literature. To cope with limited resources, many rural teachers turn to alternative instructional strategies, such as project learning, multi-age instruction and telecommunications technology, which require teachers to approach their roles differently from ways they were trained to teach (Wagen, Sederberg & Hendrix, 1982). Since these strategies are now being recommended for school restructuring in general, insights into the experiences of rural educators may prove particularly valuable (Lewis, 1992). We must remember, however, that teachers are only one element in the change process. They are part of larger school organizations which have their own priorities and feature other key actors such as administrators, school board members, parents and students. Though this study emphasizes the role of teachers in changing schools, the involvement and reactions of other school community members significantly influence how schools change.

"Receptivity" defines the ability or capacity of people to receive, take in, hold and accept. The term builds on the views of Wagen et al. (1982) and Giacquinta (1975) that receptivity is the variation in acceptable conditions of risk. The higher teachers perceive the risks of change to their professional status, the lower their receptivity to change. Waugh & Punch (1987) identify three key and related components of receptivity:

feelings about change, which affect attitudes towards change, which drive behaviors in change. Receptivity focuses on the voluntary commitment of teachers to change, implying a willingness not only to comply with and adopt an innovation but also to construct and implement it.

Sample. This study was conducted during the 1990-91 school year in the small and rural New England community of "Jackson." The elementary (K-6) school and the secondary school (7-12) each served 250 students. All 40 Jackson teachers, including the general education and special education teachers and specialists (physical education, music, art, technology, library and guidance) participated in the study. As Table 1 indicates, a majority of these teachers had taught more than ten years in the school district and had advanced degrees.

[Put Table 1 here]

Access to Jackson teachers was possible through my work as a researcher on a four-year, federally-funded special education project. The purpose of the project was to discover an effective way for teachers to explore and adopt a variety of educational strategies to better meet the needs of all learners, including those with disabilities. We tested a collaborative research and planning process with the Jackson teachers that included a system of identifying teachers as leaders for follow-up support. The Jackson schools were selected for this project because they were "typical" of many small and rural schools in New England given their limited resources, veteran teaching staffs, traditional organizational structures, strong community ties, and isolated

setting. The difficulties the Jackson schools were encountering with educational change appeared similar to those many other small and rural schools were facing.

Specific change events with which Jackson teachers contended during the four-year project included: 1) the resignation of the two principals, resulting in the appointments of a male athletic coach as elementary principal, and a young male, previously an assistant principal from out of state, as secondary principal; 2) the extended illness and death of the new secondary principal over an eighteen-month period; 3) the required participation in a time-consuming state school approval certification process; 4) an administrative mandate to heterogeneously group and teach seventh grade classes; 5) three school budgets voted down by the Jackson community in one year; 6) increased numbers of students eligible for special services and the "homecoming" of students with intensive special needs from a regional self-contained program to general education classrooms; 7) the completion of an elementary building addition which led to a controversy about allocation of classroom space; and 8) the research project itself.

Methods. Three naturalistic research methods were selected to provide multiple sources of data about teacher receptivity to change: focused interviews, participant observations and document reviews. Focused interviews were open-ended in nature, allowing teachers not only to focus on key questions about organizational and personal factors but also to reflect in general about what affects their acceptance of change. The 40 teacher interviews took place in individual, forty-five minute sessions between

October and December, 1990, the third year of the research project. Follow-up interviews were arranged as needed to clarify points made by the teachers. The interviews were audio-taped and transcribed. The two school principals were also interviewed to gain information about the purpose of certain school changes and how these changes were approached with teachers. Participant observations included 28 visits to the schools. Reviews of school and district documents provided additional views about change in the Jackson schools.

Data Analysis and Reporting. The data were analyzed using a constant comparative method of content analysis (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). This method permits inductive identification and classification of themes and patterns in data across respondents. "The Ethnograph," a computer program for analyzing text based data, facilitated this process (Seidel, Kjolseth & Seymour, 1988). Themes and patterns which emerged from the analysis were clarified and verified through an in-depth review by other project team members and selected Jackson teachers, and presentations to all Jackson teachers. Comments, insights, and clarifications were incorporated into the data analysis.

In presenting the research findings, I make extensive use of quotes from interview transcripts. The direct voices of teachers capture the essence of issues regarding teacher receptivity to change. This practice corresponds to the philosophy of naturalistic inquiry which values how participants construct their world and the words they use to express this world.

FINDINGS

Five major factors affecting teacher receptivity to change emerged from the data. Two factors were organizational in nature: basic conditions and support. Two were personal: meaning and efficacy. Another factor was both organizational and personal: voice. Indeed, it was often difficult to understand where the organizational ended and the personal began. Jackson teachers would use both types of factors in a single thought about change. But there was a difference. Organizational factors were those over which teachers had little control. Personal factors were those over which teachers exerted more influence. As I will suggest in the discussion section, it is when teachers have a voice in change, defined by the ability to initiate and decide change and to be heard as respected members of the school community, that they are able to bridge the organizational and the personal and engage in fundamental school change.

ORGANIZATIONAL FACTORS

Jackson teachers spoke most frequently about how the basic conditions of their work negatively influenced their openness to change. They talked about how difficult it was to gain support from principals, other teachers, and community members. They preferred, therefore, to concentrate on changes at the classroom level, modifying current teaching practices in ways that were comfortable for them and responsive to the needs of students.

Basic conditions. Basic conditions describe the degree to which schools are ready for change. Both elementary and secondary teachers said the climates of the Jackson schools are isolating

and uncertain and provide little incentive for working together to effect change.

> You have a lot of walls in this school. Some days you have low ones, some days big ones between your departmentalized program and your lower grade program. You have a wall between special education and regular education. You have one between teachers and administration. You even have walls between one grade and another. A lot of this can be expected. You can't expect this number of people to get together and be in a beautiful, utopian state of being. But some of these walls must be erased if we're going to change.

"Well, I'm not going to hide the fact, we're in crisis here with the principal so ill.... People have pocketed off in departments and pulled the covers up over their heads, hoping for the best."

"Everything is on hold now. Most people are waiting to see what happens. Only then can you start dealing with all these new ideas we have been putting off and thinking about."

Teachers said the climates of their schools are also negative and devisive. "I really feel people should talk about things openly and directly. But it's just the opposite here. It truly hurts the morale of the building."

> This is a negative place to work. I would love it to be a positive place. There are some of us trying to develop some comraderie....But I still say it's a negative place to work. You get negative feedback from the school board, from the community, from each other, and we've got such a large group

angry at the principal. I walk in here and I feel bombarded by this negative attitude.

"It's as if there are two camps in this school. There's the administration and a couple of teachers, and then there is another group of teachers." "Personality issues overshadow educational issues, which is a shame because they get in the way of the real focus of what we should be talking about - kids." "These problems are still there, but we've just buried them. Nobody wants to put the time and effort into trying to change."

> This year I am not going to get involved in the politics of this school. I have dedicated the rest of the year to the children....It may cost me in the long run, but teacher contracts are up this year and negotiations start soon and the frustration level will go up and again children will be put on the back of the bus...well, I will just get on the bus and walk to the back with them and let everyone else do the other stuff.

The lack of such resources as time, training, funding and personnel also inhibit teacher interest in change.

> I've got all these great ideas, but I never can put them into place. It's like moving into an old house and having all these dreams, but having no money. You're lucky if you can paint the outside of the house. That's where we're at right now. Time is a real problem in our schools, it's more so than I ever imagined.....You barely have time to eat lunch, let alone talk about the real problems around here.

"I don't see us trying to change towards our goals as long as we've got teachers teaching six different preparations [in a seven-period day]. How much energy and work outside of these four walls can you expect from one person?" "If I'm doing my job right, doing all that I am supposed to do, I just don't have time for change." "You get to the point where you can't do another creative thing if you tried." "It's not the unwillingness on the part of teachers to change as much as it is scheduling, not being able to fit it in." "When do you find the time to figure out when and how you're going to use a change, who you're going to do it with, and when you're going to do the training?"

Teachers said most staff development is largely ineffectual. "Courses get you up for a while but then it's hard to apply what you learn." "I went to a reading workshop this summer...and I came out thinking I had to change everything but then I decided I couldn't because...it just wasn't me." Teachers liked courses which "implement changes in the classroom as part of the training and then we report back for support as to how things went." They appreciated learning with and from their peers.

> It's amazing that I've worked as long as I have with these teachers and I didn't really come to know them until the training. I didn't know their views and how they felt. They helped me realize some of the views I was holding on to were archaic. And some were good things worth retaining.

Budget and personnel issues are of continuing concern. "We came up with this wonderful plan, but it needed funding. Without

the funding it failed. I mean it fell flat on its face." "We can work on changes but I think they're all dead in the water. We have no budget or staff training to make anything happen."

> The main thing that holds up a lot of changes is budgets. We've been cut so much, it's ridiculous....You have a limited amount of materials, so you can't do all the programming that you need to do. You don't have an aide, so you can't give the services you need to give. Do I do the paperwork or the services? Which is the priority? If you don't do the paperwork, the district doesn't get their money ....If you don't do the services, teachers get upset, children get frustrated, parents get upset and frustrated....So you are stuck in the middle, depending on who feels like screaming at you on a particular day.

"How many weeks have I been here? Maybe five. I find that some of my ideas and energy have already died. There's too much for one person to do. They cut the other position this year."

> September was horrible. I tried all month just to get my aide back but I had to go to the school board to do it...and no one would support me....So now I have pieces of time of other aides in the school but it's so draining because these people haven't worked with me before and they don't know how to work with my kids and it has been really tiring."

Some teachers worried whether they would even have a job the next year. They said it is difficult to think about school

change when their own personal survival and the needs of children who may not be served are at stake.

> As far as my program goes...I'm at the school board's mercy....I don't have any job security and protection. Every day, starting in February when the budgets are worked on, I sweat out whether or not they will choose to axe my program....Now I'm trying to buy a house. So I'll buy a house and then they'll say I have to leave and I'll have to look for another job. It's scary.

Student needs is another basic condition inhibiting teachers' ability to change. "So many students at this school have so many problems that it's difficult to teach because you're too busy trying to be too many things to too many people." "It's the behavior and things going on in the home that are the problems ....You can't separate their homes from what happens in school."

> The other day he had me in tears. His father had come home drunk in the middle of the night and broken things up. He was scared at school because he didn't know what would happen later. How could I teach until I dealt with this boy with tears streaming down his face? He wouldn't even talk to me in the first place; he wouldn't tell me what was the matter. We played twenty questions before I finally got to him.

"I don't know what the answer is. Society itself and the home life of some of these kids are just so bad. But if parents can't handle them at home, how do you expect the school to handle them?" "I have twenty-seven students with all sorts of problems,

more than half receiving special services. How can I sort out all the family and learning issues they face?"

Effort seems to summarize the effect a negative school climate, lack of resources and demanding student needs have on teacher receptivity to change. Teachers said it takes too much effort just to get through the school day.

> There is no time to think about change. It's frustrating because you can get most of this group involved, though not to the same extent. But the staff is so tired of carrying the load....Some key people who do a really great job are just really worn out and now we might lose some of them....If we could just have a magic wand to help us do everything.

"I'm tired of investing my time without a commitment to solutions we come up with...if we're not allowed to try and not given the support we need...it's a waste of my time and effort."

> Judging from the results, I wouldn't even be interested in starting all over again. We got nowhere. We spent all that time brainstorming problems, narrowing it down to the problem we wanted to address. We came up with a good solution and then we hit a brick wall [the school board]. After spending all that time, it was an insult.

Teachers suggested "thinking small" about change. "Maybe if we had started with a smaller problem to deal with at first, and got other people involved from the beginning, like the school board, it would have worked better." "Some years ago, we picked an issue that was bothering us but something we could do something about. And we walked away feeling proud of ourselves. Maybe we

should have tried something that wasn't so emotional." "Sometimes I think we go around and around about an idea...and don't accomplish anything...instead of just trying something and see how it works and then building on that."

Support. Jackson teachers said they need support from principals, colleagues, and community members to help get past what may always be insufficient basic conditions for change. Teachers particularly focused on the limited support they receive from principals. When positive changes occur in their schools, they said, it is despite the principals and not because of them. "It's really hard with no leadership here, a principal saying, 'We're going to have a meeting and talk about this as a staff.'"

> He doesn't know anything about my program. He doesn't know anything about my kids, about their needs...or my needs. He doesn't initiate any discussion about these things...my feeling is that he doesn't want to know."

"I went to him regarding scheduling, and he didn't help me....He told me I was a troublemaker last year and not to be one this year. I left feeling really bad, because I really care about the kids." "I didn't get anywhere with him, and, in fact, I learned that he holds a grudge...and so I've changed my tune and try to be obedient and nice...but it's only to survive."

Teachers recognized that being an administrator is not always easy. "If someone said, 'I'll give you $100,000 to be a small school principal in a small town', I'd say, 'No!' The factors you have coming at you are almost unimaginable." Regarding the secondary principal, "I saw a definite change in him last year. I

really felt he was trying to be more open and more willing to listen and take suggestions, that teacher empowerment kind of stuff." "But he's become discouraged because there are teachers who have been here forever...and the school board is still giving him a lot of crap, so his hands are tied in doing anything."

> You have to picture how embedded this town is in small-town politics. It's a whole system that works a certain way. If you've been here a while, you know this. If somebody says, 'Okay, now we're going to do this.' Then it's, 'Oh, yeah? Not in this town.'

Though recognizing the difficulties of being a principal, teachers said they are unwilling to invest in school changes until their principals become more responsive to teacher needs. "His support is definitely encouraging for me. I can generate a lot of motivation internally, but if it's not supported externally, I finally reach a point where I can't do it anymore." "Having had six or seven principals in fifteen years, you get to be like an island having to float around by yourself." "I think seeing the last hold out, the person who would always say 'We're not going to give up, we're going to do this,' having her finally say 'I've had it with him', well, that was just devastating." "Now we just rumble among ourselves and it's pointless in terms of doing any real change." "If anything is going to happen at all, it's got to be at the teachers' initiative. For a few self-motivated people, it's there but others are just fed up and don't care."

Teachers described the support of colleagues as also critical. "I'm teaming with a lot of teachers which I had never

done before. Working on that training assignment was scary for me and I think scary for her....doing it together has made it so much better." "Four of us were having problems with different children but then we found the behaviors were similiar, that all of them had lost a parent. Talking it out together, we were shocked to discover this commonality." "There is more interaction and now we are coming up with strategies to deal with kids instead of just sitting around talking which is what we did last year." "It's like sharing the wealth and four heads certainly are better than one in solving a lot of our problems."

Teacher said, however, that there needs to be stronger collaboration in the schools if schools are to truly change.

> I see teachers in this school who certainly have the skills to be instructional leaders...and other members of the faculty recognize they have those skills too, skills that they can benefit from. So, the recognition is there, but it needs to extend to the collaboration phase or even to a phase where teachers offer their skills or ask for learning from others.

"A lot of people are still resistant about teaming because they're doing their own isolated thing. Teachers tend to be isolated. You're in your own little box, in your own little textbook." "Working together takes more time. Teachers will give you their classes but they won't give you their time."

> The seminars have drawn us together because we've been forced to and now we're taking the initiative to meet and exchange ideas. We'll never have total agreement on

everything, we never will. It's like a bell curve. There are always some at one end and some at the other, but as long as the bulk of us are at the middle and working toward the goals, I think we're okay.

Many Jackson teachers wished community members were more supportive of change and less interested in maintaining current services at a minimum cost. "Last year $200,000 was chopped off our budget....People look in their wallets and say, 'What's it going to cost me? Not, what will my kid get out of this?"

People are feeling a tax pinch. I'm a homeowner here too. My taxes have just about doubled in only four years. So I've certainly felt a pinch. And I know what some of these other people are feeling. They look in the town report and see our salaries and think we're ripping them off, that we're glorified babysitters. That we don't really work for a living.

"Cut the budget and get rid of as many teachers as they can. That's the [community's] attitude right now. That's what we're hearing. It affects our performance because we know that's the attitude." "So as long as community expectations don't drive the school in new directions, it's easy to maintain faculty's current perspectives."

VOICE

A third factor which teachers said influences their receptivity to change is voice or the ability to initiate and decide school changes and to be heard as valued members of the school community. "To be told you have to do something causes the

most hard feelings and the most resistance toward accepting a new program." "We absolutely had no choice and spent five full in-service days on this....it was dumped on us."

> Some of the programs are mandated from the main office. They seem to die faster than you can shake a stick at because adults are like children, they don't like to be told what to do, that 'The whole school is going to do this.' The ones that are most successful and probably retain most of their parts in the classroom are the ones which are done like this, 'What do you think about this? If you are interested, we'll send you to do this.' In other words, volunteering.

"We've had enough things shoved down our throats....Teachers are pretty independent. You can lead a horse to water but don't shove him in."

Teachers complained about their lack of participation in decision-making. "I get upset when unilateral decisions are made and we have no input." "We haven't gotten far in terms of our goal of operating this school as a democracy....[In a democracy] people communicate and work together toward common goals, not only in words but actions."

> We've been asked, but the information isn't used....in fact it's a negative thing to give your opinion unless it agrees with what the policy already is. If I say something at the teachers' meeting that's against his view, I know I'll be observed the next day in class.

"When ideas come up at faculty meetings, the people who are opposed to something generally don't say anything." "I think the majority feel that they can't express their opinion if it differs from his....Before you more or less did what you wanted to. Now you do what [principal] wants you to do."

In response, elementary teachers established a group process for communicating and making school decisions. Though the process received only lukewarm support from the principal, teachers found it "has gotten people to say things they wouldn't have said normally. It has brought things to light."

> I like the process because the way the school is set up, we don't have a lot of staff meetings....I like to know how other teachers are feeling and I like other people to know how I'm feeling without having to go around to fifteen different people and saying, 'I'm angry about this.' And that is what was happening. A lot of people were upset about things but had no way to express them with others.

Many teachers also said they concentrated on initiating change where they could, in their own classrooms. "I've developed these courses, accumulating different ideas and lessons and building contacts over the years....They're now learning things they need to know and use when they get out of school." "I decided I wanted to do [new math program] in my class and just did it." "I'm teaching the general sections too and decided not to water down the materials this year for them and they're handling it okay. The course is just too important to water it down." "I designed it for those kids who have trouble concentrating....

and it sort of blossomed into a multi-purpose corner. It's been so effective every year, regardless of what room I'm in, I design my room so that that corner is there." "I get other teacher input but the ultimate decision about [special education placement] ends up being mine and the parents....I know what I'm supposed to do, I know the kids, I know the needs."

Some teachers, however, hesitated when offered opportunities for more involvement in decision-making. "Organization-wise, I hate being out front. It's not my forte. My strong point is being in the trenches with the kids....I'll just give plenty of feedback from the trenches." Complaining about peer reactions to a project they initiated, secondary teachers said, "They don't want others coming in and telling them what to do. They missed the whole point entirely...and so gave up the opportunity to have a little bit of power in decision making." Many teachers decide just to go along with change, knowing another program will soon take its place.

> If I'm supposed to do them [change programs], I do them. If I'm not supposed to do them, I don't do them. I'm one of those people. I know there is a lot on the bandwagon and you get involved and then something else comes along and I never have any say....So if I'm asked to do it, I just will.

PERSONAL FACTORS

Jackson teachers said two major personal factors influence their receptivity to change: meaning and efficacy. Meaning comes from fitting a change to the needs of students. Efficacy derives from knowing a change makes a difference in the lives of students.

Meaning. Change is meaningful when teachers have the ability to evaluate and adapt a change effort according to the needs of students. "My approach may be a little old-fashioned but it works for me. I'm not anxious to try things that I see other people doing not very effectively. I'm very conservative in that respect." "I haven't been inspired into doing the new [program] because I'm not convinced how valuable it is. I prefer the other one because I believe it will make a difference in the long run for children." "There's probably good in all new programs and trends coming down the line. Sometimes you just have to pick and choose what you feel is best for kids and what you've found to have the best results." "With every new thing that comes along, you keep a little bit of what really works for you and students."

> Practicing and internalizing a change also leads to meaning. What works for me is if somebody says to me, 'Now take what we are learning and do it in your own class.' Then I will do it....Until I actually use something, I don't feel like I've integrated it into my repertoire....That's the ultimate goal to me...you got to use it, otherwise you lose it.

"I was very much against mastery learning to begin with, and then I was forced to use it with another teacher and I found that I really enjoyed working with it. I saw a lot of benefit."

> My attitude about mainstreaming has really changed. I used to be pretty rigid in my thinking...but now that I'm spending more time in the mainstream setting, I'm gaining the respect of all kids, like a 'real' teacher. I love it. I am there to help my kids experience greater success in the mainstream.

Some teachers said it is easier to believe in the need for a change when the whole school together invests in the change. "I like the idea that everyone has made a commitment to do these things because there is more likelihood of follow-through....It's helpful to the students to know there's consistency throughout the school." A lack of commitment from colleagues is disheartening "because if some teachers don't make room in the day to do the program, then it will not fully materialize in the school."

Jackson teachers also spoke about life experiences which have influenced their thinking about change.

> Why am I still here?...The way I grew up directly relates to and mirrors the majority of children I work with. When I was in school, I carried a lot of the same labels....Teachers didn't want me in their classrooms because I was difficult....So I'm here now to change things for the children who are like I was.

One teacher remembered how she got involved in a graduate program. She had a girl in her class whose learning problems were not being served well by the school system. Other professionals, who knew the girl only slightly, had the power to make decisions regarding the girl's placement because this teacher did not have the "right" degree. The teacher decided to get the degree so others would listen to her when she argued for what was best for children.

Some teachers talked about how their own development as adults affects their ability to change. "I think that as you get older, you tend to see things a little bit different. You get away from tunnel vision and see more of the big picture."

I don't feel as structured as I once was. I don't feel the need to be. I feel comfortable being flexible. Children need that...to know that if there's change and something happens, you don't panic over it....I use a more independent style now and we do things like learning centers that we didn't do before. I saw these things in other classes and they seemed to work better.

"My teaching has evolved from becoming a mother myself....I am more nurturing than when I started out." "I've learned that I need to continue growing and learning and it's got to be fun. You don't want to lose the humor in all of this change stuff."

Openness to change is also a matter of personal attitude. "What turns me on to change, even though I'm not as willing to change as other teachers, is I'm always curious to see if there's something I'm not doing that I should be doing for kids." "I don't want to sound egotistical but I'm always willing to try something new. But I get discouraged when it's not followed through." "I love change, and that's what happens in my room and I'm sure change is good for kids, or at least some kids." "Sometimes I say, 'I've gotten into a rut.' But then I'll do this and change that. That's how I basically teach, trying to find different stories or activities to do."

I'm not saying that I'm a great teacher; I'm just saying that I am creative with some ideas. I'm going along and I'll stop and say, 'Kids, I've got a great idea.' My lesson plans go out the window...and the next day we are doing it.

"I think you have to change....You have to adapt to not only the children but the times."

Efficacy. Efficacy reflects the degree to which teachers feel they make a difference in the lives of students. Efficacious teachers continually challenge themselves to gain the skills needed to motivate students to do their best. They treasure the connections they develop with students, often choosing to serve as guides in learning rather than as experts.

A number of teachers feel they are effective teachers. "It's neat to see his successes....It's like magic. I work with him every day and you can see the wheels of learning turning for him."

> I found out that he likes to draw. So I got this card and told him that if he has all stars on it at the end of the day, he gets a free period to draw. He's been here three weeks now, he hasn't missed one day, and he's doing his work now for all the teachers. Tomorrow I'm taking him to the post office to paint and he's on cloud nine....Three weeks is a long time for him.

"I get frustrated with some of the content area still being taught...but I was lucky enough to become involved in special education where we break that cycle and teach a lot of effective stuff." "It's really exciting to see the continuity, how they carry over what we worked on last year and use it this year. It's rewarding to see those skills are actually there." "I feel good about myself when I see a kid accomplish something....I see him smile and I'm amazed that he can improve that quickly....A smile gives you all the reward you want. That's why I continue to

teach." "I think I'm a pretty good teacher. And I only say that because I've had an awful lot of kids come back and tell me, 'I got through this college course or I got this job or whatever because of something I picked up in your class.' You can't put a price tag on that."

Teachers said students are why they stay in teaching. "I'll have experiences during the day that are rewarding, even with just one student, somebody you weren't expecting to surprise you. Then you feel being here is worthwhile." "My kids get me here every day....it's exciting to see them accomplish something, see them improve in self-esteem, and let people know they're individuals."

> Without the kids, I wouldn't be here because I'm doing it for them. It's like doing your 'shtick' every day. You're like an entertainer...and at the end they really discover something. So you're constantly building experiences for them that will hopefully work out, and that's the fun and the challenge and the stress of it...trying to make everything come together.

"This is probably the busiest year I've ever had, but it's probably my happiest year teaching so far because now I'm doing what I've been wanting and training to do with children."

Several teachers discussed an internal motivation that drives their teaching. "This internal thing I've got, I could do all kinds of things and I do.... Just give me some time and I'll teach you how to make quiche, how to bake bread, how to do anything. I can't stop learning and doing."

I've seen that ever since I've been teaching. The new people teaching just like the people who have been here for thirty years. Only a few people are truly energized by doing something different. They want to learn and take risks. So, on a personal level, to keep their jobs interesting and challenging, they take it upon themselves to learn new skills and try them out. But you don't see that very often. It's not easy, it's not comfortable, and it's very time-consuming.

DISCUSSION

Jackson teachers describe the process of change as exhausting, often meaningless and uncertain. We can better understand why if we consider how five organizational and personal factors, which teachers say affect their receptivity to change, relate. Three themes stand out: the depth of change, the progressive nature of the change process, and the importance of voice. They lead to a model for understanding how we can increase teacher willingness to change.

The Depth of Change. Jackson teachers operate at the surface level of change. They are content with modifying traditional practices instead of incorporating new methods and knowledge at a deeper instructional level (Hopkins, 1989). They are more receptive to adjusting their existing and often comfortable teaching styles than to completely rethinking their professional beliefs, skills and commitment. They prefer "first-order" changes, which tinker with the current structures of schools, rather than "second-order" changes, which fundamentally transform

the rules, roles and relationships which define how schools operate (Cuban, 1990; Sergiovanni, 1989).

The preference of Jackson teachers for "first-order" change corresponds to their preoccupation with organizational factors affecting receptivity to change. The teachers say an isolating and uncertain school climate, limited resources including time, students with an increasing variety of learning and social needs, and lack of support particularly from administrators negatively affect their willingness to change. They say it is hard to find personal meaning in change when they are just trying to survive hectic and challenging school days. They say the "costs" of change outweigh the personal "benefits" of change.

Rosenholtz (1990) suggests, "If policy changes pose too great a burden, teachers may dissociate themselves from their work and receive social support from colleagues for divestiture" (p. 86). Many Jackson teachers are indeed dissociating themselves from teaching and efforts to change their schools. Twelve teachers (30 percent), for instance, are considering alternatives other than teaching in Jackson, similar to the 25 percent of teachers in Rosenholtz's study who have either contemplated leaving the profession or reported others doing so due to the difficulty with planned change. Many Jackson teachers are also choosing to make smaller changes in an arena in which they can effect change on their own terms and at their own pace - the individual classroom. Their approach reminds me of Waugh and Punch's (1987, p. 244) comment regarding "closed" climates which serve as "protective shells preventing outside influences from impinging on the inner

aspects of teaching and learning." Many Jackson teachers have created "closed" classrooms which protect their ability to have some say in how children are served in their schools.

The Progressive Nature of the Change Process. The experiences of Jackson teachers suggest the process of change is a progressive journey, moving from "first-order" to "second-order" change, from organizational concerns to personal meaning. This progression is similar to the work of several stage developmental theorists. Maslow (1954), for instance, describes a hierarchical model of human motivation: satisfaction of physiological needs leads to meeting safety, belonginess and love, esteem, and finally self-actualization needs. Herzberg & Mausner (1967) develop a similar model of hygiene and motivating factors. Hygiene factors, such as physiological, safety and belonging needs, serve to maintain individual performance. They provide an "essential base" for motivating factors, including esteem and self-actualization needs, which lead individuals to continually develop their abilities. Individuals choose to be satisfied with their current skills or to grow in new ways. Hopkins (1990) finds teachers who "go beyond competence" are more likely to change than those content to remain in their own "niches."

> In brief, our results implied that variance in curriculum utilization could be accounted for by the prevailing school climate and the nature of the individual teacher. We found that teachers operating at a higher psychological level [using Maslow's stages] and in a more open, democratic school climate used the greatest number of educational ideas (p.42).

Particularly relevant to the findings of this study is the model of Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger & Tarule (1986) which uses the metaphor of voice to describe five progressive life stages in understanding the intellectual growth and development of women: silence, received knowledge, subjective knowledge, procedural knowledge, and constructed knowledge. As women develop confidence in their own voices, they become more open to and understanding of the needs of the world around them. They become "connected teachers" by using their voices to help students develop and find their own voices in learning.

Four of the forty Jackson teachers appear "connected" in their work with students. Though they discuss the organizational constraints affecting change in ways similar to those of their colleagues, they seem to "rise above" these constraints to focus instead on alternative structures of learning to benefit students. They find meaning and efficacy in the actualization of their students, gaining internal satisfaction when their students perform the best that they can. They focus on relationships, responsiveness, and interdependence in their own development as teachers and in the development of their students (Gilligan, 1982; Lyons, 1989). In doing so, the four teachers talk about their voices in change. They say they use their voices not only to construct stimulating environments which encourage students to find their own voices in learning but also to fight for school organizational changes to support these environments.

The Importance of Voice. Voice in change is the ability of teachers to initiate and decide change and to be heard as

respected members of the school community. It combines the concepts of authority, agency, and communion: authority describing the power of teachers to express their professional expertise, judgement, and commitment to young people by determining change; agency meaning that this power is actually heard and valued by others, for instance by principals, school board members, and state officials; and communion suggesting that the power to effect change needs to be cooperatively held by teachers speaking and working together for change (Bakan, 1966; Josselson, 1987). Teachers can develop

> their own authentic voices if they emphasize connection over separation, understanding and acceptance over assessment, and collaboration over debate; if they accord respect to and allow time for the knowledge that emerges from firsthand experience; if instead of imposing their own expectations and arbitrary requirements, they encourage students to evolve their own patterns of work based on the problems they are pursuing (Belenky, et al., 1986, p. 229).

Voice appears to be the critical bridge that allows teachers to move from a preoccupation with organizational constraints affecting change to a construction of personal meaning in change. It involves both a sense of external and internal meaning; for instance, when teachers gain the organizational authority to determine school decisions, and do so cooperatively, they come to believe in their personal agency to make those decisions. Vygotsky (1978) suggests that the shift from the external to the internal is in fact a significant aspect of human development. He believes that

dialogue - conversing, listening to others, and creating personal opinions and plans - supports this shift. It helps people practice and develop confidence in their own speech and in their own ways of thinking. It allows people to transform external words into internal meaning (Belenky, et al., 1986) and acknowledge to themselves that they have the power to make a difference in their schools (Watts & Castle, 1992, p. 685).

The majority of Jackson teachers say they experience little authority, agency and communion in their work. They use such words as "we're told what to do," "it was shoved down our throats," "I had no input," "it's a negative thing to give your opinion," and "we're isolated." They feel silenced by administrators, specifically told not to speak up and "to cause trouble." They say they would be more receptive to change, especially change that fundamentally transforms how their schools operate, if their voices were heard and reckoned with in dialogues about change. As one teacher indicates,

> To reach a professional and even an emotional level where you can try things in the classroom, you have to have support first....If that came first, and out of that arose a need to make changes, and people could express their interest or their discomfort and you wouldn't feel that you were such an oddball for doing so, maybe real change would bubble up from that kind of interaction among staff.

A model for increasing receptivity to change. Though the majority of Jackson teachers are preoccupied with organizational constraints, giving weight to the work of Maslow (1954), Herzberg & Mausner (1967) and Belenky, et al. (1986) regarding the hierarchical

and linear direction of change, the overall findings of this study suggest that the relationship between organizational and personal factors is more interactive. As Figure 1 suggests, the factor of voice appears to drive this interaction. The majority of Jackson teachers indicate that having voice would lead them to not only fight for changes in organizational conditions but also to find personal meaning and efficacy in change. They say that having the authority to make decisions would turn their concerns about organizational constraints into energy for doing something about them. They say that losing what little voice they do have in classroom decision-making would only exacerbate their preoccupation with organizational issues and further their dissociation from school change efforts.

Four Jackson teachers, however, are already focused on those personal factors which increase receptivity to change. They are using their voices to create challenging learning environments for all students and to work for organizational changes to support these environments. Their openness to "second-order" changes suggests that fundamental school change ultimately depends on teachers feeling "connected" to the process of change. Teachers can make connections with change, however, only when they have a voice to determine what change is needed and how change will happen. Without a voice in change, teachers will remain focused on smaller, "first-order" changes that involve less risk and commitment. Thus, we can increase teacher receptivity to change by increasing teachers' ability to address organizational and personal factors in change.

[Place Figure 1 here]

This model leads to specific recommendations for increasing teacher receptivity to change.

1. Teachers must have the authority to explore, experiment with, and determine change in their schools. This study confirms other research showing significant change will not occur in schools until teachers "buy into" and "own" the change. Change cannot be "done" to teachers; meaningful and long-lasting change takes place in partnership with teachers. Though awareness has increased regarding the need for teacher involvement in decision-making, in many schools it happens superficially or not at all.

2. Teachers must be listened to. Principals often say to teachers, "I want your opinion on this," but then they ignore what teachers recommend. Fundamental change will not occur in schools where teachers' voices are not respected, where teachers are told what to do instead of asked, "How can we do this together?"

3. Teachers must work collaboratively to determine change. A school is comprised of many individuals. Significant change requires agreement among all participants to alter school schedules, to adopt new instructional strategies, to transform school curricula. One teacher can make a difference in her classroom; many teachers, in partnership with students, parents and administrators, can change a school.

Underlying these three recommendations is the need for teachers to have regular blocks of time to meet and interact, and to develop and implement a set of clearly articulated goals that focus schools in addressing the learning needs of all students. Teacher voice in change does not happen over night; it evolves over time as teachers

come to believe in their collective ability to construct and implement meaningful school change.

CONCLUSION

Creating the conditions in which all teachers can become "connected" with their students should be the focus of school reform efforts. We know that the better teachers are at their work, the more rewarding they find teaching, and the more committed they are to continually becoming the best teachers they can be (Sykes, 1990). But we have to help them to embrace change.

This study describes factors which teachers say influence their receptivity to change. It indicates that when teachers are stuck on organizational constraints affecting change, and fail to move beyond them to find personal meaning and and professional efficacy in change, fundamental school change will fail to take hold. It suggests that teachers will embrace change, both organizational and personal, only when they gain a forceful voice in the change process itself. Teachers need the power to initiate and decide change, the affirmation that their voices are heard and respected by others, and the sense of community that results in working together for change.

Note:
The research reported in this article was supported in part by Grant No. H023F80027 from the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education. Points of view or opinions stated in the article do not necessarily represent official agency positions.

Table 1
Characteristics of Sample

Characteristic	Number	Percent
Total	40	100.0
Sex		
Female	25	62.5
Male	15	37.5
Level		
Elementary (K-6)	19	47.5
Secondary (7-12)	21	52.5
Years Teaching		
1 to 5 years	7	17.5
6 to 10 years	2	5.0
11 to 15 years	17	42.5
16 and more years	14	35.0
Years of Age		
22 to 30 years	3	7.5
31 to 40 years	20	50.0
41 to 50 years	11	27.5
51 and more years	6	15.0
Education Level		
Bachelor's	17	42.5
Master's	23	57.5

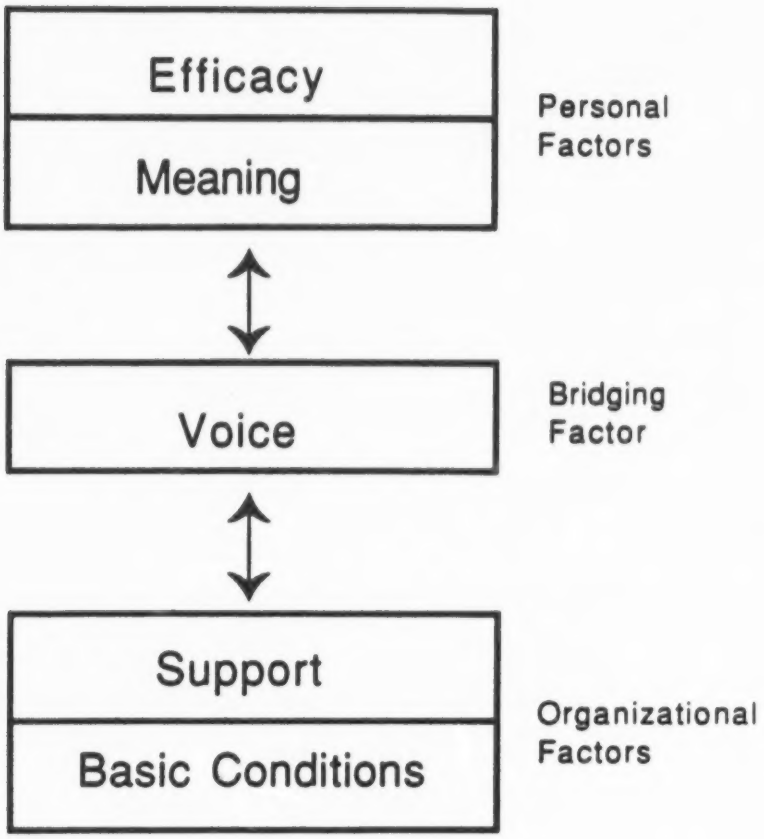

Figure 1. Factors affecting teacher receptivity to change.

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